

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Prior to entry of this Amendment, claims 1-11 and 13-21 were pending for examination. A non-final office action mailed May 20, 2008 ("Office Action"), has rejected claims 1, 4, 13, and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,222,458 to Harris (hereinafter "Harris") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,675,002 to Lipovski (hereinafter "Lipovski"); rejected claims 2 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Harris in view of Lipovski, in further view of U.S. Patent No. 4,498,193 to Richardson (hereinafter "Richardson"); rejected claims 3, 5-6, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Harris, in view of Lipovski, in further view of International Publication WO 98/34412 to Geyra (hereinafter "Geyra"); and rejected claims 7, 9, 17, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Harris, in view of Lipovski, in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,687,497 to Purvulescu et al. (hereinafter "Purvulescu"). The Office Action objected to claims 8, 10, 18, and 20 as depending from rejected base claims.

This amendment amends claims 1, 11, 13, 14, 19, 21, cancels claims 7-10, 17, 18, and 20, and adds new claims 23-31. Hence, after entry of this amendment, claims 1-6, 11, 13-16, 19, 21, and 23-31 will stand pending for examination. Claims 1, 13, 23, and 28 are independent claims. The applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the pending claims, for at least the reasons presented below.

Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 has been amended to include elements similar to those previously recited by claim 10 and intervening claims 9 and 7. Claim 8 essentially has been rewritten in independent format as new claim 23. Similarly, claim 13 has been amended to include elements similar to those previously recited by claim 20 and intervening claim 17, while new claim 28 essentially restates previous claim 18 in independent format.

Claims 7-10, 17, 18, and 20 have been canceled accordingly.

New dependent claims 24-27 and 28-32 have been added, corresponding to existing dependent claims 2-4, 11, 14-16, and 21, respectively.

Claim 14 has been amended to correct a typographical error, and claims 11, 19, and 21 have been amended to properly depend from pending claims and for consistency with the claims from which they depend.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Applicants express to the Office their appreciation for the indication that claims 8, 10, 18, and 20 are directed to allowable subject matter. As noted above, independent claims 1, 13, 23, and 28 have been amended (or added) to correspond generally to claims 10, 20, 8, and 18, respectively, and those independent claims therefore are believed to be allowable as indicated by the Office Action. The remaining claims (claims 2-6, 11, 13-16, 19, 21, 24-27, and 29-32) each depend from one of these independent claims, and each of them is believed to be allowable at least by virtue of this dependence.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

As noted above, the Office Action rejected claims 1-7, 9, 11, 13-17, 19, and 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Harris, in view of Lipovski, and sometimes in view of other references. The applicants respectfully disagree with these rejections, and it is submitted that the Office Action fails to establish a *prima facie* case that any pending claim is unpatentable under § 103(a). Nonetheless, in the interest of expediting prosecution of this application, the claims have been amended to place them in condition for allowance, in accordance with the Office Action's indication of allowability, as noted above.

The applicants, however, reserve the right to pursue the unamended claims in this or another application, and specifically reserve the right to contest the rejection of any claims over the references cited herein. Hence, the amendment of the claims herein should not be interpreted as either an acquiescence to the rejections in the Office Action or a concession that

the combined disclosures of Harris and Lipovski teach or suggest each element of any claim pending prior to entry of this amendment.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 303-571-4000.

Respectfully submitted,

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